

ESA Statement, 63rd session of the UN COPUOS Legal Subcommittee
Agenda item 3. General Exchange of Views

Distinguished Chair,

Let me extend my congratulations to your appointment and wish you a successful term of leading this Subcommittee. Allow me also to express my gratitude to Ms Majaja, the outgoing Chair, for her admirable efforts in the past two years. I further take this opportunity to congratulate Ms Holla-Maini, the new Director of the Office for Outer Space Affairs and express my appreciation to her for leading the team of the Office in preparing the session of this Subcommittee.

Distinguished delegates,

The European Space Agency, as a permanent observer to the Committee, continues to be most appreciative of the opportunity to address this Subcommittee and share its efforts and objectives in fostering space cooperation among European states and together with international partners in space research, technology and applications.

As an intergovernmental organisation, ESA holds the value of international cooperation in high regard. Optimising the use of space for society, addressing economic, societal and political challenges, and advancing scientific understanding, industrial capabilities, research and technological development are ingredients which drive the changing global space sector and its promise for a sustainable future that benefits everyone. ESA acts both as a spacecraft operator and a space agency, a mechanism of cooperation for its twenty-two Member States, four Associate Members, four European Cooperating States, Canada, as well as an ever-growing number of international partners. ESA also remains dedicated to capacity building and recalls the important work of the European Centre for Space Law, the European Space Policy Institute and the European Centre for Space Economy and Commerce.

Allow me to highlight some of ESA's recent and upcoming milestones:

- Two ambitious scientific missions successfully departed into space in 2023: First, Juice, the Jupiter Icy Moon Explorer, embarked on its eight-year journey to the Jupiter system; and Euclid started its mission designed to explore the composition and evolution of dark energy and dark matter in the Universe. Looking forward, ESA is eagerly awaiting the launch of the Hera mission this autumn, aiming to complete humankind's first planetary defence experiment, initiated by NASA's successful DART mission.
- The last Ariane 5 rocket lifted off in 2023, completing an era of more than 20 years of successful operation of this launcher. ESA is looking forward to its successor, the versatile heavy-duty launcher Ariane 6, to be launched on its first flight scheduled for this summer.

- Demonstrating its continuous commitment to space sustainability, ESA's updated internal space debris mitigation policy and related technical requirements came into effect in November 2023, following the ambitious goal to drastically reduce the impact of debris on the space environment by 2030.
- ESA, together with industry, continues to play a central role in the European Cooperation for Space Standardisation (ECSS). Throughout the past months, ESA furthermore facilitated the community driven 'Zero Debris Charter', a non-binding instrument offering high-level guiding principles and jointly defined targets towards space safety and sustainability, open for signature to interested entities.
- Finally, at the Space Summit held last November in Spain, Ministers backed Europe's sustainable and competitive space ambitions and, among others, paved the way for a new European Launcher Challenge as well as the competitive development of a low Earth orbit cargo return service. Going forward in strengthening partnership in Europe, the 11th Space Council in Belgium next month, a joint and concomitant meeting of the ESA Council and EU Council, shall further reinforce Europe's competitiveness through space.

Distinguished delegates,

ESA will continue to support the framework of international consensus-making through offering opportunities for dialogue and interpretation of the international legal framework for space activities. As one of the first intergovernmental organisations having declared acceptance of the rights and obligations of three of the UN space treaties, ESA holds the rule of law in high regard and seeks to further its understanding, advising its Member States, upon their request, on questions related to international space governance. Likewise, ESA continues to provide support to its Member States in the establishment and implementation of space legislation through technical and legal advice. Finally, international cooperation in the exploration and use of outer space remains of utmost importance for ESA. This finds expression in meanwhile almost six hundred international agreements signed since the signature of the ESA Convention, a treaty which will celebrate its 50th anniversary next year.

Let me conclude by underlining ESA's continued commitment to contribute to the global space community as a responsible space actor, accelerating the benefits and use of space for all, strengthening the role and rule of law in space and supporting and furthering the important work of this Committee.

Thank you.